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Standards of accommodation for air travel

Report of the Secretary-General

I. Introduction

1. The present report covers the period from 1 July 1998 to 30 June 1999, and is submitted in accordance with General Assembly decisions 44/442 of 21 December 1989 and 46/450 of 20 December 1991, in which the Assembly requested the Secretary-General to submit annual reports on standards of accommodation for air travel. As also requested by the Assembly in its decision 40/455 of 18 December 1985 and section XIII of its resolution 45/248 A of 21 December 1990, respectively, information is included on expenditures by the United Nations for first-class air travel and relevant exceptions.

2. During the period under review, standards of accommodation for air travel were governed by General Assembly resolution 42/214 of 21 December 1987, in which the Assembly decided that all individuals, with the exception of the Secretary-General and the heads of delegations of the least developed countries to the regular and special sessions of the Assembly, whose travel was financed by United Nations organizations and programmes and who had been previously entitled to first-class accommodation, would be required to travel at the class immediately below first class. In the same resolution, the Assembly authorized the Secretary-General to exercise his discretion in making exceptions to allow first-class travel on a case-by-case basis.

II. Delegation travel

3. The General Assembly, in its resolution 42/214, limits the payment of first-class accommodation by air to one representative of each Member State designated as a least developed country attending the regular and special sessions of the Assembly. For the fifty-third session, for the period from 1 July 1998 to 30 June 1999, claims submitted to date involved 23 such journeys at a cost of $123,545.

III. Exceptions authorized by the Secretary-General

4. As stated above, in General Assembly resolution 42/214, the Secretary-General was authorized to exercise his discretion in making exceptions to allow first-class air travel on a case-by-case basis. In addition, business-class travel by air may be authorized by the Secretary-General in certain circumstances, in accordance with administrative instruction ST/AI/249/Rev.3 of 29 March 1989.

5. Generally, in reviewing cases that may warrant an exception, the Secretary-General takes into consideration the following circumstances:

(a) A medical condition may exist necessitating a level of comfort not available in the normal standard of accommodation to which the traveller is entitled. Such cases

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are referred to the Director of the Medical Services Division of the Secretariat for recommendation. It should be noted that the practice of granting exceptions in cases where a traveller is of an advanced age has been discontinued;

(b) The normal standard of accommodation is not available and, owing to the exigencies of the service, the traveller is required to travel on a particular date. Cases also arise where accommodation at the normal entitlement is not available and the cost of daily subsistence allowance, while waiting for the next available seat, would be greater than the higher standard of travel;

(c) The traveller is considered an eminent person, such as a former head of State, or a prominent figure in political, humanitarian or cultural areas;

(d) The traveller is a prominent person who is donating his or her services free of charge to the Organization, and, in some cases, at a loss of personal income. Such individuals may be accorded the standard of accommodation that they normally use when travelling;

(e) The traveller, after completing a full day of work, is required to travel through the night in order to resume work, attend meetings or present a paper at another location on the following morning or immediately upon arrival. Where such cases involve arduous journeys, it has been deemed reasonable that the standard of accommodation accorded to the traveller should provide the best rest possible while travelling, or provide the conditions most conducive to work while flying, or both.

6. On 18 March 1998, the Secretary-General decided, as an exception, that all travel of the Deputy Secretary-General should be in first class, in keeping with her special status. As regards practical arrangements, efforts first are made to obtain upgrades to first class against payment of the full business-class fare. Where this is not feasible, the first-class fare is paid. During the reporting period, six such journeys were carried out at a total additional cost of $12,075.

7. In respect of exceptions to air travel authorized during the period from 1 July 1998 to 30 June 1999 owing to the circumstances described in paragraph 5 above, the present report provides, in annexes I to V, detailed information on the additional cost of and reasons for such exceptions.

8. Altogether, for travel during the period from 1 July 1998 to 30 June 1999, the Secretary-General exercised his discretion by authorizing, as an exception, 55 cases of first-class air travel. In addition, during the same period, the Secretary-General authorized business-class travel by air as an exception to the standards of accommodation in 25 cases. These 80 exceptions amount to 0.22 per cent of the total of about 36,000 official journeys completed for the United Nations Secretariat and United Nations funds and programmes during the reporting period.

9. It should be noted that in accordance with the established practice to ensure personal safety, the Secretary-General was accompanied on all trips during the period under review by a personal aide/security officer who travelled by air in first class. The total additional cost of 15 such trips was $32,456.

10. The total additional cost incurred by the Organization for the period 1 July 1998 to 30 June 1999 was $101,939, or 0.092 per cent of the total of approximately $110 million of official travel expenditures of the United Nations Secretariat and the United Nations funds and programmes during the same period.

11. While continuous administrative oversight has kept the number of exceptions at a minimum, it should be noted that in certain cases they are unavoidable. For example, exceptions owing to the lack of availability of regular standards are dictated by the exigencies of specific situations, and their number cannot therefore be kept constant or be forced to decrease without hampering the efficiency of the traveller's missions. Moreover, in many cases, to compel a traveller to wait until the established standard of travel becomes available would result in extra costs for the Organization for the daily subsistence allowance over and above the cost of an upgrade; an upgrade therefore remains the only cost-effective option.

Table 1

Summary of exceptions, 1 July 1998–30 June 1999

(Cost in United States dollars)

	First class		*Business class*		*Total*	
Reasons for exceptions	*Number of trips*	*Additional cost*	*Number of trips*	*Additional cost*	*Number of trips*	*Additional cost*
Medical condition	14	11 139	2	1 629	16	12 768
Regular standard of accommodation not available	6	855	8	1 107	14	1 962
Eminent persons	10	12 806	11	13 648	21	26 454
Donating services free of charge to the Organization	1	2 893	3	5 279	4	8 172
Arduous journeys	3	7 893	1	159	4	8 052
Personal aides/security officer	15	32 456	0	0	15	32 456
Deputy Secretary-General	6	12 075	0	0	6	12 075
Total	**55**	**80 117**	**25**	**21 822**	**80**	**101 939**

Table 2

Summary of exceptions, 1 July 1997–30 June 1998

(Cost in United States dollars)

	First class		*Business class*		*Total*	
Reasons for exceptions	*Number of trips*	*Additional cost*	*Number of trips*	*Additional cost*	*Number of trips*	*Additional cost*
Medical condition	1	130	8	6 943	9	7 073
Regular standard of accommodation not available	4	4 825	6	4 867	10	9 692
Eminent persons	0	0	9	6 375	9	6 375
Donating services free of charge to the Organization	3	9 197	6	8 354	9	17 551
Arduous journeys	0	0	2	500	2	500
Personal aides/security officer	13	34 347	0	0	13	34 347
Deputy Secretary-General	3	6 299	0	0	3	6 299
Total	**24**	**54 798**	**31**	**27 039**	**55**	**81 837**

Annex I

Exceptions authorized owing to medical conditions, 1 July 1998-30 June 1999

Designation of traveller	*Itinerary*[a]	*Additional cost (US dollars)*
A. First class		
1. Staff member, Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees	Geneva/Tokyo/...	2 720
2. Personal Representative of the Secretary-General for East Timor	Tampa/New York/Tampa	302
3. Personal Representative of the Secretary-General for East Timor	Tampa/New York/Tampa	265
4. Personal Representative of the Secretary-General for East Timor	Tampa/New York/Tampa	292
5. Personal Representative of the Secretary-General for East Timor	Tampa/New York/Tampa	292
6. Personal Representative of the Secretary-General for East Timor	Tampa/New York/Jakarta/ Denpasar/Dili/Denpasar/ Jakarta/Tampa/New York	2 398
7. Personal Representative of the Secretary-General for East Timor	Tampa/New York/Tampa	236
8. Personal Representative of the Secretary-General for East Timor	Tampa/New York/Tampa	245
9. Personal Representative of the Secretary-General for East Timor	Tampa/New York/Tampa	20
10. Personal Representative of the Secretary-General for East Timor	Tampa/New York/Tampa	245
11. Personal Representative of the Secretary-General for East Timor	Tampa/New York/Tampa	470
12. Personal Representative of the Secretary-General for East Timor	Tampa/New York/Tampa	431
13. Personal Representative of the Secretary-General for East Timor	Tampa/New York/Tampa	244
14. Personal Representative of the Secretary-General for East Timor	Tampa/New York/Singapore/ Jakarta/Dili/Australia/New York/Tampa	2 979
Subtotal		**11 139**
B. Business class		
1. Staff member, MINURSO	Laayoune/Casablanca/ Montreal/New York	178
2. Staff member (UNDP)	New York/Stockholm/New York	1 451
Subtotal		**1 629**
Total		**12 768**

[a] The points of ellipses (...) in a given itinerary indicate that some legs of the itinerary were by regular standard of accommodation and no exception was involved.

Annex II

Exceptions authorized when the regular standard of accommodation was not available, 1 July 1998-30 June 1999

Designation of traveller	*Itinerary*[a]	*Additional cost (US dollars)*
A. First class		
Discussions regarding Ethiopia/Eritrea conflict		
1. Staff member, Department of Political Affairs	Asmara/Jeddah	110
Programme approach training workshop		
2. Staff member, UNDP	.../Abidjan/Monrovia/...	141
3. Staff member, UNDP	.../Abidjan/Monrovia/...	141
UNIC Director's meeting		
4. Staff member, United Nations Information Centre	Istanbul/New York	71
Preparation of a policy paper on communication and media		
5. Consultant, United Nations Office for Project Services	.../Accra/Freetown/Accra/...	200
First meeting of the Committee of Seven on Guinea-Bissau		
6. Representative of the Secretary-General	Monrovia/Accra/Monrovia	192
Subtotal		**855**
B. Business class		
1. United Nations Population Fund candidate	Geneva/New York/Geneva	119
2. Staff member, UNDP	.../Caracas/Curaçao/...	77
3. Staff member, United Nations Office for Project Services	.../Islamabad/New York	57
4. Staff member, Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs	.../Geneva/New York	324
Discussions regarding Ethiopia/Eritrea conflict		
5. Staff member, Department of Political Affairs	Jeddah/Addis Ababa	39
Emerging democracies forum		
6. Staff member, Office of the United Nations High Commission for Human Rights	.../Jeddah/Cairo/...	300
Workshop on regional cooperation in flood control and management for improvement of the urban environment in Asia and the Pacific, phase I		
7. Director-General of the Administrative Centre for China's Agenda 21	Beijing/Bangkok/...	103

Designation of traveller	*Itinerary*[a]	*Additional cost (US dollars)*
Expert group meeting on trade promotion policy		
8. Participant	Delhi/Bangkok/...	44
9. Participant	Delhi/Bangkok/...	44
Subtotal		**1 107**
Total		**1 962**

[a] The points of ellipses (...) in a given itinerary indicate that some legs of the itinerary were by regular standard of accommodation and no exception was involved.

Annex III

Exceptions authorized for eminent persons, 1 July 1998-30 June 1999

Designation of traveller	*Itinerary*	*Additional cost (US dollars)*
A. First class		
Annual meeting of the UNEP Sasakawa Environment Prize for 1999		
1. Princess of Thailand	Bangkok/Geneva/Bangkok	1 261
Panel of Eminent Persons on Algeria		
2. Former Prime Minister of India	New Delhi/Lisbon/New Delhi	699
3. Spouse of former Prime Minister of India	New Delhi/Lisbon/New Delhi	699
4. Former Prime Minister of France and former President of the European Parliament	Paris/Algiers/Paris	54
5. Former Permanent Representative of the United States to the United Nations	Washington, D.C./Lisbon/ Washington, D.C.	1 970
6. Attorney-General of Kenya	Nairobi/Lisbon/Nairobi	2 319
Eighth session of the Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice		
7. President of Tajikistan	Washington, D.C./ Frankfurt/Vienna	1 451
8. Minister of Foreign Affairs, Tajikistan	Washington, D.C./ Frankfurt/Vienna	1 451
9. State Secretary, Tajikistan	Washington, D.C./ Frankfurt/Vienna	1 451
10. Minister of Finance, Tajikistan	Washington, D.C./ Frankfurt/Vienna	1 451
Subtotal		**12 806**
B. Business class		
High-level meetings with the Secretary-General		
1. Former Prime Minister of Senegal	Dakar/New York/Dakar	661
2. Former Prime Minister of Senegal	Dakar/New York/Dakar	1 394
Award ceremony of UNEP Sasakawa Environment Prize		
3. Chairman of Europe 21, Joint President of Society of Labour Lawyers, Life Peer of the House of Lords, Member of Her Majesty's Privy Council, Former Minister of State, Department of Trade and Industry. United Kingdom	London/New York/London	3 987
Commemoration of fifty years of United Nations peacekeeping		
4. Recipient of Dag Hammarskjöld Medal	London/New York/London	6 021

Designation of traveller	*Itinerary*	*Additional cost (US dollars)*
Launching of 1998 Human Development Report		
5. Princess of Jordan	Amman/Manama/Amman	96
Conference on poverty reduction strategy		
6. Senior Director-General for International Economy, Department of External Trade, China	Beijing/Tokyo/Beijing	300
7. Member of Planning Commission, Bangladesh	Dhaka/Tokyo/Dhaka	168
8. Vice Minister for Prime Minister's Office, Lao People's Democratic Republic	Vientiane/Tokyo/Vientiane	232
Panel of Eminent Persons on Algeria		
9. Former Minister of France and Former President of the European Parliament	Paris/Lisbon/Paris	124
10. Former Prime Minister of Jordan	Amman/Lisbon/Amman	665
Total, B		**13 648**
Grand total, A and B		**26 454**

Annex IV

Exceptions authorized for prominent persons donating their services free of charge to the Organization, 1 July 1998-30 June 1999

Designation of traveller	*Itinerary*[a]	*Additional cost (US dollars)*
A. First class		
Tribute by the Secretary-General		
1. Goodwill Ambassador, United Nations Children's Fund	Geneva/New York/Geneva	2 893
Total, A		**2 893**
B. Business class		
Panel meeting during twentieth session of UNEP Governing Council on deforestation		
1. Keynote speaker and Professor Emeritus, University of Hamburg	London/Nairobi/...	1 406
Round table of film directors in connection with the United Nations television forum		
2. Film Director	Paris/New York/Paris	3 059
3. Film Director	Los Angeles/New York/Los Angeles/Tokyo	814
Total, B		**5 279**
Grand total, A and B		**8 172**

[a] The points of ellipses (...) in a given itinerary indicate that some legs of the itinerary were by regular standard of accommodation and no exception was involved.

Annex V

Exceptions authorized for cases involving arduous journey, 1 July 1998-30 June 1999

Designation of traveller	*Itinerary*[a]	*Additional cost (US dollars)*
A. First class		
1. Administrator, UNDP	.../Boston/Paris/...	890
2. Secretary-General, United Nations Conference on Trade and Development	New York/Rio de Janeiro/Brasilia/Sao Paolo/ New Delhi/Bombay/ London/Geneva	2 210
3. Staff member, Executive Office of the Secretary-General	.../London/New York/...	4 793
Subtotal		**7 893**
B. Business class		
1. Staff member, UNDP	New York/Amsterdam/...	159
Subtotal		**159**
Total		**8 052**

[a] The points of ellipses (...) in a given itinerary indicate that some legs of the itinerary were by regular standard of accommodation and no exception was involved.

Annex VI

Exceptions relating to the travel of the Deputy Secretary-General, 1 July 1998-30 June 1999

Reason for exception/designation of traveller	*Itinerary*[a]	*Additional cost (US dollars)*
First class		
1. Deputy Secretary-General	New York/London/...	1 618
2. Deputy Secretary-General	New York/Amsterdam/.../ Geneva/New York	1 350
3. Deputy Secretary-General	New York/Tunis/.../Beirut/ Dubai/Nairobi/New York	1 426
4. Deputy Secretary-General	New York/Geneva/New York	2 122
5. Deputy Secretary-General	New York/Maputo/.../Buenos Aires/Paris/New York	3 437
6. Deputy Secretary-General	New York/Geneva/New York	2 122
Total		**12 075**

[a] The points of ellipses (...) in a given itinerary indicate that some legs of the itinerary were by regular standard of accommodation and no exception was involved.